



The Sixty-eighth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,784th Concert

Paratore Brothers

April 25, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Petite Suite (1888)

En Bateau

Cortège

Menuet

Ballet

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881)

Pictures at an Exhibition (1874)

Arranged for two pianos by Reginald Haché

Promenade

Gnomus

Promenade

Il vecchio Castello

Promenade

Tuileries

Bydlo

Promenade

Ballet of the Chicks in Their Shells

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle

Promenade

The Market Place at Limoges (Great News!)

Catacombæ (Sepulcrum romanum)

Con Mortuis in lingua mortua

The Hut on Fowl's Legs (Baba Yaga)

The Great Gate of Kiev

INTERMISSION

Debussy

Three Nocturnes (1897–1899)

Arranged for two pianos by Maurice Ravel

Nuages

Fêtes

Sirènes

Claude Bolling (b. 1930)

Jazz Sonata in One Movement for Two Pianos

The Musicians

Whether playing on one piano or two, Anthony and Joseph Paratore are recognized as one of the nation's foremost keyboard duos. They have performed on the international stage for more than thirty years, bringing the art of duo piano playing to the highest level. The brothers' professional career as a duo officially began in 1973 when, as students of famed pedagogue Rosina Lhevinne, they presented their New York City debut to great acclaim. International attention came the following year when they won first prize in the Munich International Music Competition, followed by their European debut six months later.

The Paratore Brothers have since appeared throughout the United States and Europe, including festival performances in Berlin, Lucerne, Salzburg, and Vienna as well as at Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival and Spoleto USA. The duo has performed with the New York Philharmonic and the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Detroit, and San Francisco. European orchestra engagements have included the municipal orchestras of Amsterdam, Berlin, London, Vienna, Rotterdam, and Warsaw, performing with many famous conductors including Pierre Boulez, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Christoph von Dohnanyi, Seiji Ozawa, Leonard Slatkin, Georg Solti, and David Zinman.

The Paratore Brothers' diverse repertoire encompasses the standard literature for four-hand piano duet and two pianos as well as an ever-growing number of rediscovered or newly commissioned works. Composers William Bolcom, Wolfgang Rihm, and Manfred Trojahn have written especially for the duo. Their work with jazz great Dave Brubeck, who personally entrusted his original two-piano music to them, is very special to the brothers. They premiered his *Points on Jazz* as well as other Brubeck pieces, appeared with him in several German cities, and released a CD of his music for two pianos on the Universal label.

The duo has received many awards and honors and has performed for the presidents of Germany, Italy, and the United States. They are honorary members of the Dante Alighieri Society and recipients of the “I Migliori” award presented by the Pirandello Lyceum for excellence in their chosen field. They received the George Washington Medal of Honor for outstanding contributions to community work throughout the United States, and in 1992 a scholarship was established in their name for a deserving music student at their alma mater, Boston University.

The Paratore Brothers appear frequently on television, including NBC’s *Today Show* and *Tonight Show*, as well as on National Public Radio’s syndicated news program *All Things Considered* and American Public Radio’s *Performance Today*. They have participated in PBS television specials, including the twentieth anniversary of the Boston Pops with John Williams conducting, “Piano Pizzazz” from *Wolf Trap*, and a special program titled “The Paratores: Two Brothers, Four Hands.” Critic Richard Dyer of the *Boston Globe* noted that it was “fun to watch with a MTV dazzle . . . talent is what the Paratore Brothers are all about.”

Program Notes

Most likely composed in 1888, Claude Debussy's *Petite Suite* for piano duet does not exhibit the style that one associates with the composer's maturity. Debussy played the premiere performance with Jacques Durand (his future publisher) on February 2, 1889. In 1884, at age twenty-two, he had won the prestigious Prix de Rome, enabling him to study in Rome for two years. Though his time in Italy had been more frustrating than productive—he had not found inspiration in Italian opera or any other music that was current in Italy at the time—the period immediately following (1887–1890) was quite fruitful. It was only after trips to Bayreuth and the Paris Exhibition of 1889 that his mature style began to emerge, taking on new idioms and sounds that he heard in the music of Wagner and the Asian gamelan music that was played at the exhibition.

Set in four movements, the *Petite Suite* is lyrical and charming. It was probably intended by Debussy as music for amateur players, as opposed to the more complex pieces he would eventually compose for concert pianists. The suite's popularity was so great that in 1907 Debussy entrusted its orchestration to a younger composer, Henri Büsser (1872–1973), and its popularity continues to this day. In composing the suite, Debussy borrowed from the musical styles of the time as well as from his renowned contemporaries. The rolling barcarolle of *En Bateau* calls to mind Gabriel Fauré's (1845–1924) style, while *Cortège* is more rhythmic and festive, in the manner of Georges Bizet (1838–1875). The centerpiece of the suite, *Menuet*, shows the influence of the French operas of Jules Massenet (1842–1912), and *Ballet* takes the listener straight to the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where dancers whirled to the music of Leo Delibes (1836–1891) and Emmanuel Chabrier (1841–1894).

Modest Mussorgsky and artist Viktor Hartmann (1834–1873) were introduced to each other sometime around 1870. Both were devoted to the cause of Russian art, and they quickly became close friends. In 1873 Hartmann died suddenly of an aneurism at age thirty-nine. His untimely death devastated Mussorgsky. In January 1874 a memorial exhibition of Hartmann’s work was put together by art critic Vladimir Stasov at the Russian Academy of Arts. The paintings that Mussorgsky saw there became the basis for *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which eventually became his best-known work. Touched by the images from the exhibition and still mourning the loss of his friend, Mussorgsky completed the entire work in one month’s time. The opening *Promenade* and its recurrences represent the composer’s meandering through the exhibition from one painting to the next. Sometimes the pace is hurried; at other times it is relaxed and reflective. The variety of musical colors, styles, and imagery in each of the movements makes *Pictures at an Exhibition* a continually enjoyable and fresh work, no matter how many times one has listened to it.

Publication of *Pictures at an Exhibition* did not come until 1886, almost six years after Mussorgsky’s death. It was originally written for piano solo, and in that version has become a showpiece of virtuosity for the concert pianist. It was orchestrated numerous times, most famously by Maurice Ravel in 1922, after which it became a mainstay of the concert repertoire. The arrangement for two pianos four hands was done by Reginald Haché in 1982.

Debussy’s categorization as an “Impressionist”—a label that he scorned along with Renoir, Monet, and other artists who were similarly categorized by the press—was fully realized by the time he wrote his three *Nocturnes* in the late 1890s. Having spent several years living the bohemian life, Debussy was much influenced by all other forms of art that were being created around him. He had become friends with several artists, including Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), and James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903). It was a set of eponymous paintings by Whistler that inspired Debussy to compose these three *Nocturnes* for orchestra. Maurice Ravel arranged them for two pianos.

Debussy included an introductory note to the *Nocturnes* to explain how he envisioned them:

The title *Nocturnes* is to be interpreted here in a general and, more particularly, in a decorative sense. Therefore, it is not meant to designate the usual form of the nocturne, but rather all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests. *Nuages* (Clouds) renders the immutable aspect of the sky and the slow, solemn motion of the clouds, fading away in gray tones lightly tinged with white. *Fêtes* (Festivals) gives us the vibrating, dancing rhythm of the atmosphere with sudden flashes of light. There is also the episode of the procession (a dazzling fantastic vision), which passes through the festive scene and becomes merged in it. But the background remains consistently the same: the festival with its blending of music and luminous dust participating in the cosmic rhythm. *Sirènes* (Sirens) depicts the sea and its countless rhythms and presently, among the waves silvered by the moonlight, is heard the mysterious song of the Sirens as they laugh and pass on.

After first winning world-wide acclaim as a jazz performer, pianist, arranger, and conductor, Claude Bolling wrote music for films and backed Brigitte Bardot, Sacha Distel, Juliette Greco, and other vocalists in commercial recording sessions. Born in Cannes, in southern France, Bolling has spent the greater part of his life in Paris where, as a child prodigy, his formative musical influences were many and varied. After initial training with the pianist, trumpeter, and percussionist Marie-Louise Bob Colin in Nice, Bolling discovered his passion for jazz while still at school. Strongly drawn toward ragtime and influenced by recordings of the great early exponents of jazz piano, he was particularly inspired by the stride style of Fats Waller. By 1944 Bolling was already active semi-professionally in small groups. From the 1960s onward he wrote prolifically for films, and has more than a hundred film and TV soundtracks to his credit.

During the early 1970s, complementing a steady output of mainstream jazz albums, he began to experiment with another interest, classical cross-over, and composed quite a number of works that fall into this category. He collaborated with flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal on his album *Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio*, followed by several collaborations with other well-known classical musicians such as Maurice André, Emmanuel Ax, and Yo-Yo Ma on pieces such as *Suite for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*. He composed several two-part inventions for piano, all set in sonata form, and two sonatas for two pianos.

*Program notes by Danielle DeSwert Hahn, music program specialist,
National Gallery of Art*

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Diane Walsh, pianist

Music by Couperin, Haydn,
Ravel, and Schubert

May 2, 2010
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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